

# Delinquent Dads Given a Warning

By EVELLE YOUNGER  
District Attorney  
Fathers who won't support their children are about to discover that it's "one, two, three strikes — you're out."

Or, to phrase it differently, we've had a crackdown, but starting now we're cracking down harder. We're using a tougher formula. If a man falls down three times and doesn't have an adequate reason, he could find himself face to face with criminal charges.

The record shows that during the first four months of 1966 the number of our non-support criminal complaints swelled by something like 50 per cent. Now we can expect an even more spectacular increase.

**THE LOW POINT** in criminal complaints filed against defaulting fathers in the past year was registered in September, 1965, when they dipped to 163. The high point was last February, when the District Attorney's office went to court with 371 of them.

These figures are more or less representative. What happened between those two months?

About a year ago we embarked on a new policy, growing out of the fact that all the civil courts could do was to jail offenders for contempt, and it was not enough. A man cited for contempt could serve up to five days for missing a month's payment. Many apparently did not mind at all.

Fortunately for the anguished mothers and the sometimes hungry children, the law provides more severe penalties if convicted of failure to provide. The father could serve up to a year in jail and pay a fine running to \$1,000.

**WE DECIDED** it was time to start filing more cases under this statute.

During the last four months of 1965 we went to court with 880 complaints, and in the first four months of this year, 1,301 more. That's how we came up with an increase figure of 50 per cent.

But there are still many frustrated and bitterly unhappy mothers, their payments in arrears, their husbands unheeding and contemptuous. To these women it seemed that nothing was being done.

They were still up against the old procedures. They would complain and the offenders would be taken to court and the fathers would go to jail for a few days and promise to behave better. And pretty soon it would be the same thing all over again.

The District Attorney's office, under this system, prosecuted criminally only after the courts gave the signal. We did the best we could, and obviously we've done pretty well.

**BUT JUST** as obviously we had to do better.

And so now we've come up with this new formula, by which every father who has been twice held in contempt and defaults again will be prosecuted automatically in a criminal court.

He's had his turn at bat.

**THE CAMPAIGN** to enlist the youth of the county in a broad program of good citizenship got under way the last day of May and showed enthusiastic support at once.

Perhaps the best indication of the reception of the "Cool Head" movement was the comment we got from so many high school students. It was repeated after assembly programs all the way from East Los Angeles to Santa Monica. One student expressed it this way:

"This is a fine idea, but you came to the wrong kids. We're going to school and we take our studies seriously and we want to make something of ourselves. The ones you really should be talking to are the dropouts."

**WELL, WE** should be talking to the dropouts. And we intend to use every means we can find to reach those idle young people who, as any police officer can tell you, are most likely to create problems.

And this is just where the high school Cool Heads come in. To them we said: "Who can do a better job than you in reaching the legions of youth whose sole place of organization is the streets?"

Their answer was not in the least surprising. As one said:

"Nobody. We'll do our best."

**AN ASSOCIATED PRESS** dispatch in the newspapers recently told, perhaps more eloquently than any District Attorney's admonition, the hazards of "grabbing a gun for self-protection."

The news item from Indianapolis stated: "A high school girl who arose before dawn to quiet the family dog was shot to death in the kitchen today when her father mistook her for a burglar."

Our booklet, "Operation on Guard," is very specific on this point. "If you have firearms of any sort," it warns, "do not use them unless some person is actually trying to enter your residence or destroy it by force, or unless some person is trying to take your life or harm you physically. Shooting at someone who just happens to be outside is not justified under any conditions."

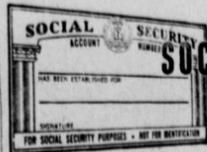
Can we repeat that too often?

**THE INQUEST** into the shooting of Leonard Deadwyler by Los Angeles policeman Jerold Bova, and a ver-

dict of accidental death, received a heartening reception. Almost everybody thought the proceedings were eminently fair and the outcome warranted.

Curiously, there were some who were critical of the use of this open and wholly public method of sifting the facts.

To those who disparaged the holding of an inquest, perhaps we might say this: Suppose this case had simply gone to the Grand Jury. How would the public have viewed the outcome?



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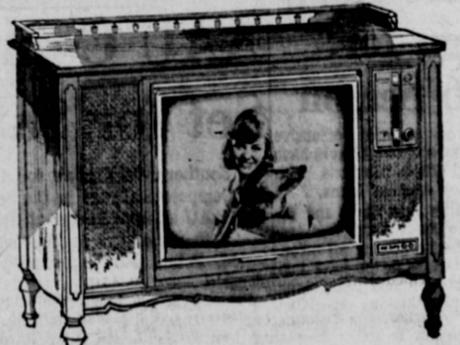


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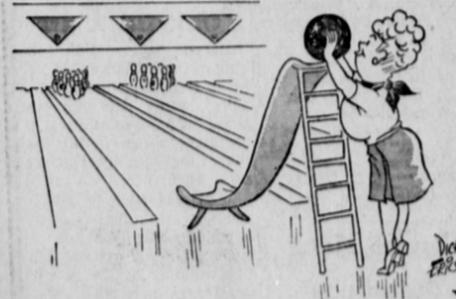


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**THE SLIDE:** Indigenous to the nursery found in the modern bowling center. Illustrated use is frowned upon by most proprietors, and by Junior who is entitled to his fun while Mom is having hers.

**THE SLIDE:** A slide, just before releasing the ball, is natural and necessary to maintain accuracy and a controlled follow through. If the bowler comes to an abrupt stop, he must let the ball go abruptly.

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